Remarks/Arguments:

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-16 remain in the application. Claims 1, 4, and 12 have been amended.

In item 2 on page 2 of the Office action, claims 1-4, 6-12, and 14 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by Takeuchi (JP 061260980 A) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

The rejection has been noted and claims 1 and 12 have been amended in an effort to even more clearly define the invention of the instant application. The claims are patentable for the reasons set forth below. Support for the changes is found in claim 4 of the instant application.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claims 1 and 12 call for, *inter alia*:

bringing an item of clothing into contact with at least one absorbent body of an absorbent material in the form of a

continuous strand, and moving the at least one absorbent body and the item of clothing at the same speed.

The Takeuchi reference discloses a device for drying clothing having conveyor means for suspending items of clothing. The conveyor means have drive means intermittently driving the conveyor means. Dehydration means include a sponge rubber water absorbing device (23) having sponge rubbers (38 and 40) and air cylinders (34) for moving the sponge rubbers (38 and 40) toward each other in the direction of the item of clothing.

The reference does not show bringing an item of clothing into contact with at least one absorbent body of an absorbent material in the form of a continuous strand, and moving the at least one absorbent body and the item of clothing at the same speed, as recited in claims 1 and 12 of the instant application. The Takeuchi reference discloses a device for drying clothing having a conveyor, which runs intermittently. When the conveyor is stopped the water absorbing device having sponge rubbers is brought into contact with the item of clothing by air cylinders. Accordingly, the water absorbing device contacts the item of clothing when the item of clothing is stopped. Takeuchi does not disclose that an item of clothing is brought into contact with an absorbent body, which

is moved at the same speed as the item of clothing. This is contrary to the invention of the instant application as claimed, which recites bringing an item of clothing into contact with at least one absorbent body of an absorbent material in the form of a continuous strand, and moving the at least one absorbent body and the item of clothing at the same speed.

Since claims 1 and 12 are believed to be allowable over Takeuchi, dependent claims 2-4, 6-12, and 14 are believed to be allowable over Takeuchi as well.

The following remarks pertain to claim 11.

As will be explained below, it is believed that claim 11 was patentable over the cited art in its original form and the claim has, therefore, not been amended to overcome the references.

Claim 11 calls for, *inter alia*:

> bringing an item of clothing into contact with at least one absorbent body of an absorbent material in the form of a continuous strand and having a plurality of sections, and circulating the absorbent body to successively move individual sections of the absorbent body into contact with the item of clothing; and

subjecting the item of clothing to action of at least one gas jet acting transversely to a surface of the item of clothing following contact with the absorbent body.

The reference does not show bringing an item of clothing into contact with at least one absorbent body of an absorbent material in the form of a continuous strand and having a plurality of sections, and circulating the absorbent body to successively move individual sections of the absorbent body into contact with the item of clothing, as recited in claim 11 of the instant application. The Takeuchi reference discloses a device for drying clothing having a conveyor, which runs intermittently. When the conveyor is stopped the water absorbing device having sponge rubbers is brought into contact with the item of clothing by air cylinders. Accordingly, the water absorbing device contacts the item of clothing when the item of clothing is stopped. Takeuchi does not disclose circulating an absorbent body of material for moving sections of the absorbent material into contact with the item of clothing. This is contrary to the invention of the instant application as claimed, which recites bringing an item of clothing into contact with at least one absorbent body of an absorbent material in the form of a continuous strand and having a plurality of sections, and circulating the absorbent body to successively move individual sections of the absorbent body into contact with the item of clothing.

Furthermore, the reference does not show subjecting the item of clothing to action of at least one gas jet acting transversely to a surface of the item of clothing following contact with the absorbent body, as recited in claim 11 of the instant application. The Takeuchi reference does not disclose any gas jets acting on the item of clothing.

In item 5 on page 3 of the Office action, claim 13 has been rejected as being obvious over Takeuchi (JP 061260980 A) under 35 U.S.C. § 103. Since claim 12 is believed to be allowable, dependent claim 13 is believed to be allowable as well.

In item 6 on page 3 of the Office action, claims 5, 15, and 16 have been rejected as being obvious over Takeuchi (JP 061260980 A) in view of Henry et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,722,053) (hereinafter "Henry") under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Regarding claims 5 and 15, Henry does not make up for the deficiencies of Takeuchi. Since claims 1 and 12 are believed to be allowable, dependent claims 5 and 15 are believed to be allowable as well.

Regarding claim 16, the following remarks are made.

As will be explained below, it is believed that claim 16 was patentable over the cited art in its original form and the claim has, therefore, not been amended to overcome the references.

Claim 16 calls for, *inter alia*:

a transporting device moving a plurality of items of clothing successively in a direction of the at least one absorbent body and away therefrom and between the at least one absorbent body and the pressure-exerting roller.

The Henry reference discloses a device and method for pre-drying textile filaments. The device includes squeeze-drying means (5) acting on a layer of filaments (3).

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's comments in item 6 of the Office action, that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the cloth dewatering method and apparatus of Takeuchi with the pressure-exerting roller as taught by Henry.

As noted above, Takeuchi discloses that the device for drying clothing has a conveyor which runs intermittently. When the

conveyor is stopped the water absorbing device having sponge rubbers is brought into contact with the item of clothing by air cylinders.

It is applicants' position that a person of ordinary skill in the art **would not** modify the device disclosed by Takeuchi as suggested by the Examiner because the Takeuchi reference discloses that the item of clothing is stopped, and two air cylinders press the sponge rubbers together with the item of clothing between the sponge rubbers. The use of a pressure ~~exerting roller as suggested~~ by the Examiner and disclosed by Henry would not function if the item of clothing remained stationary. Accordingly, the use of a pressure exerting roller would destroy the function of the device disclosed in Takeuchi because the function of the sponge rubbers and air cylinders of the Takeuchi reference would be destroyed. Since the modification of the device disclose in the Takeuchi reference as suggested by the Examiner would destroy the intended function of rubber sponges, there is no motivation to combine the references.

A critical step in analyzing the patentability of claims pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103 is casting the mind back to the time of invention, to consider the thinking of one of ordinary skill in the art, guided only by the prior art references and

the then-accepted wisdom in the field. See In re Dembiczak, 175 F.3d 994, 999, 50 USPQ2d 1614,1617 (Fed. Cir. 1999). Close adherence to this methodology is especially important in cases where the very ease with which the invention can be understood may prompt one "to fall victim to the insidious effect of a hindsight syndrome wherein that which only the invention taught is used against its teacher." Id. (quoting W.L. Gore & Assocs., Inc. v. Garlock, Inc., 721 F.2d 1540, 1553, 220 USPQ 303, 313 (Fed. Cir. 1983)).

Furthermore, most if not all inventions arise from a combination of old elements. See In re Rouffet, 149 F.3d 1350, 1357, 47 USPQ2d 1453,1457 (Fed. Cir. 1998). Thus, every element of a claimed invention may often be found in the prior art. See id. However, identification in the prior art of each individual part claimed is insufficient to defeat patentability of the whole claimed invention. See id. Rather, to establish obviousness based on a combination of the elements disclosed in the prior art, there must be some motivation, suggestion or teaching of the desirability of making the specific combination that was made by the appellant. See In re Dance, 160 F.3d 1339, 1343, 48 USPQ2d 163.5, 1637 (Fed. Cir. 1998); In re Gordon, 733 F.2d 900, 902, 221 USPQ 1125,1127 (Fed. Cir. 1984).

The motivation, suggestion or teaching may come explicitly from statements in the prior art, the knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, or, in some cases the nature of the problem to be solved. See Dembiczak, 175 F.3d at 999, 50 USPQ2d at 1617. In addition, the teaching, motivation or suggestion may be implicit from the prior art as a whole, rather than expressly stated in the references. See WMS Gaming, Inc. v. International Game Tech., 184 F.3d 1339, 1355, 51 USPQ2d 1385, 1397 (Fed. Cir. 1999). The test for an implicit showing is what the combined teachings, knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, and the nature of the problem to be solved as a whole would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art. See In re Keller, 642 F.2d 413, 425, 208 USPQ 871, 881 (CCPA 1981) (and cases cited therein). Whether the examiner relies on an express or an implicit showing, the examiner must provide particular findings related thereto. See Dembiczak, 175 F.3d at 999, 50 USPQ2d at 1617. Broad conclusory statements standing alone are not "evidence." Id. When an examiner relies on general knowledge to negate patentability, that knowledge must be articulated and placed on the record. See In re Lee, 277 F-3d 1338, 1342-45, 61 USPQ2d 1430, 1433-35 (Fed. Cir. 2002).

Upon evaluation of the examiner's comments, it is respectfully believed that the evidence adduced by the examiner is

insufficient to establish a prima facie case of obviousness with respect to the claims. Accordingly, the examiner is requested to withdraw the rejection.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claims 1, 11, 12, or 16. Claims 1, 11, 12, and 16 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art and since all of the dependent claims are ultimately dependent on claims 1 or 12, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-16 are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel respectfully requests a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

Petition for extension is herewith made. The extension fee for response within a period of three months pursuant to Section 1.136(a) in the amount of $1020 in accordance with Section 1.17 is enclosed herewith.

Applic. No. 10/608,571
Amdt. dated December 16, 2004
Reply to Office action of June 16, 2004

Please charge any other fees which might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner & Greenberg P.A., No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,

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